

session 5: **handout** AGE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Age Matters: Know what a child is able to learn at each stage of growth and development. Discipline is teaching good behavior. It is not punishment for bad behavior. Make sure that discipline is appropriate for your child's age.

The Power of Love: To teach your child good behavior, you need to have a positive emotional bond with him or her. Parents need to show their love through kind words and affection. Children learn that you love them even if you don't always love their behavior.

Mean What You Say: Be firm with your children so they know you mean what you say and will back it up. If you say there will be consequences for their actions, make sure to follow through. Consequences shouldn't be harsh, just consistent.

Praise, Praise, Praise: Recognize and say nice things whenever your children behave well (even if it is something very small). Don't just notice when your child does something wrong.

Hints for Teaching Children of Different Ages

Birth to Seven Months

Babies cannot help being babies. They cannot understand what they have done wrong, so they cannot be effectively disciplined.

Eight to 14 Months

Your baby will start to explore what the rules are, but cannot really stick to them. Say "no" firmly, and repeat it as necessary. Remove the baby from the situation, or distract the baby with a toy.

Fifteen Months to Two Years

Your child will begin to test the rules, but still cannot stick to them. The best way to deal with problem behavior is to remove your child from the situation or distract the child with another activity.

Two to Four Years

Children this age are still learning what the rules and limits are. You need to set a good example and be consistent. They learn from your example. At times, children will push the limits just to see what will happen. These are the "terrible twos."

- Set firm limits and monitor your child closely. At this age, children do not yet have inner controls, so you must be in charge.
- Be consistent in your rules. If you say there will be a consequence, follow up on it. In addition, the consequences should fit the action. For example: "If you throw that again, I am going to take it away for the rest of the day." If you don't take the object away, your child will learn that you don't really mean what you say.
- A "time out" chair or corner, where your child must sit quietly for short periods of time (no more than 10 minutes) after misbehaving, is useful. (Note: This may be more effective with older children who are beginning to understand consequences of their actions.)
- Make sure your child does not have to misbehave to get your attention. At this age, children begin to imitate, so be conscious of your own behavior.

Four to Eight Years

Most children of this age can understand when they have misbehaved. They have the capacity to control their own behavior.

- Be sure to tell your child what he or she did wrong, how it made you feel and what you expect from him or her in the future.
- Let your children learn from natural and logical consequences of their behavior. Natural consequences are the results of behavior that occurs naturally, such as getting cold if you play outside without a coat. Logical consequences are those that parents set up, such as taking away a toy if the child leaves it in the middle of the living room floor. Consequences do not need to be extreme to be effective, just consistent.